

## **Fact sheet - fibre**

Healthy eating doesn't mean eating less of everything. Here's something you can actually eat more of - FIBRE.

Fibre is the name for a special group of carbohydrates. You get lots of fibre from meals that include beans, brown rice, wholemeal pasta, vegetables and wholemeal bread. So, many Asian, Chinese, Italian, Spanish and Greek meals can be very good ways of getting fibre.

Sometimes people think of starchy foods like bread, pasta and rice as being fattening. These foods especially wholemeal varieties, are rich in fibre and provide half as many calories as fat. Fibre rich foods are very important for good health. They help prevent constipation and fill you up without giving too many calories - useful if you are watching your weight. They may protect against bowel problems, including cancer of the bowel, which is one of the most common cancers in Britain. If you already suffer from bowel disorders like diverticulitis, eating more fibre will probably help. Foods that are naturally rich in fibre have lots of other vitamins and nutrients too.

Fibre is also not lost in cooking. Bran is a source of fibre, but you shouldn't need to add any to your food.

## **How to eat more fibre**

- try to eat at least 4 thick slices of bread a day, preferably wholemeal. Other kinds of bread are also good for fibre, especially if they are made from wholemeal flour
- use wholemeal flour instead of white flour when baking
- eat breakfast cereals. Go for ones with ingredients that are wholegrain (e.g. 100% whole-wheat) and avoid sugar coated ones.
- try using more peas, lentils and beans. Dried beans, like red kidney beans, are a very good way of getting fibre, but make sure you cook them properly! These are very cheap and still very nutritious
- use tinned beans more often. They are a good way of getting fibre and they are already cooked
- eat more potatoes. Most of the fibre is in the skin, so try different ways of cooking them. Cassava, plantain and yams are a good way of getting fibre too
- brown rice has more fibre than white, and it is tastier too. If you have trouble switching to brown rice, pasta etc., try mixing brown with white until your taste buds adjust
- eat more unsalted nuts and dried fruit. They're ideal for snacks or try adding them to your breakfast cereal
- try to eat at least one piece of fruit a day and a good variety of vegetables. As well as providing fibre they are essential for vitamins and minerals.